

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows. The changes are shown by strikethrough (for deleted matter) and underlining (for adding matter).

1. (Amended) A process for handling and stacking a plurality of thermoformed ~~containers or lids~~ objects, which comprises the following ~~sequence of phases steps~~:

- Az*
- obtaining ~~during a thermoforming phase mouldings of lids and containers, having~~ thermoformed objects each formed with at least three stacking protrusions or <sup>?</sup> spacers, ~~all having the same space arrangement in all the each thermoformed object products of the same moulding,~~ at least one of the stacking protrusions or spacers of <sup>?</sup> a same thermoformed object being set out located in a non specular symmetric way with respect to at least a centre line of the respective thermoformed object container or lid and at a distance from the same centre line of the ~~respective container or lid~~ different from that of the others protrusions or spacers
  - arranging one ~~or a moulding of said thermoformed objects containers or lids~~ in at least one support template <sup>?</sup> to keep them in order according to the spatial space arrangement ~~that they had during the thermoforming phase,~~
  - ~~turning through a predetermined angle rotating every other thermoformed object or moulding of objects either containers or lids by a predetermined angle before or during their~~ <sup>their</sup> (a) transfer to a stacking station, and
  - stacking the thermoformed objects ~~mouldings of thermoformed containers or lids~~ with alternate thermoformed objects ~~mouldings turned through rotated by~~ said predetermined angle, ~~so as to obtain stacks of thermoformed objects containers or lids,~~ where the stacking protrusions of a thermoformed object container or lid are offset with respect to those of the next thermoformed object container or lid in each stack.

2. (Amended) A process according to claim1, wherein the ~~said rotation phase the step of turning the thermoformed objects~~ includes picking up ~~a moulding of~~ thermoformed objects from a supporting template,

turning the ~~said moulding~~ thermoformed objects about a vertical axis ~~or the single containers or lids of said moulding~~, while the ~~said~~ thermoformed objects are lifted, and placing the ~~said~~ thermoformed objects rotated through the ~~said~~ predetermined angle on the same template or on another template loaded with thermoformed objects that have not been turned.

A<sub>2</sub> 3. (Amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein the ~~said~~ thermoformed objects ~~containers or lids~~ are rotated through an angle of 180°.

4. (Amended) A plant for handling and stacking thermoformed objects ~~containers or lids~~ having at least three projections ~~(8a, 8b)~~ acting as stacking spacers, at least one of which is arranged at non specular symmetry with respect to at least a centre line ~~(m-m)~~ of the respective thermoformed object container or lid ~~(2)~~, said plant (1) including, ~~in sequence~~, a receiving station (3) for a thermoformed object container or lid ~~or a moulding of containers or lids~~ (2), at least a ~~stacking or working~~ handling station (6) for said thermoformed objects ~~containers or lids~~ (2), a stacking station (4) for said thermoformed objects ~~containers or lids~~ (2), means ~~(5, 50)~~ of transferring the thermoformed objects ~~containers or lids~~ (2) from the receiving station (3) to the stacking station (4) through each ~~working or~~ handling station (6), wherein and is characterized in that at least one of the ~~said~~ handling stations (6) includes handling means (17) arranged to rotate through by a predetermined angle about a vertical axis ~~every other moulding of all thermoformed objects~~ ~~containers or lids~~ (2) before or during their transfer to said stacking station (4), thereby obtaining stacks (7) of thermoformed objects ~~lids or containers~~ (2), where the stacking spacers ~~(8a, 8b)~~ of a one thermoformed object container or lid ~~(2)~~ are angularly offset with respect to those of the next thermoformed object container or lid.

5. (Amended) A plant according to claim 4, wherein said handling means ~~are~~ comprises a support structure ~~(15, 16)~~ and a head ~~or~~ unit (17) for picking up samples of a ~~moulding of~~ thermoformed objects ~~products~~ (2), which ~~is~~ are rotatably supported

~~rotatably~~ and can be ~~lift~~ lifted and lowered on said support structure ~~(15, 16)~~.

6. (Amended) A plant according to claim 5, wherein said ~~picking-up unit~~ head unit ~~(17)~~ comprises a support member ~~(19)~~ rotatably mounted around a vertical axis on said support structure ~~(15, 16)~~, a multiplicity of spacers ~~(20)~~ carried by said support member ~~(19)~~ and extending downwards, and a holding means ~~(21)~~ carried by each said spacer ~~(20)~~ and spaced apart with respect to the remaining holding means ~~(21)~~ according to the configuration of ~~a moulding of the~~ thermoformed objects ~~products~~ ~~(2)~~ transported by said transfer means ~~(5, 50)~~.

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7. (Amended) A plant according to claim 6, wherein said holding means ~~(21)~~ includes suckers.

8. (Amended) A plant according to claim 6, including a geared motor unit ~~(18)~~ for controlled rotation of said support member ~~(19)~~.

9. (Amended) A plant according to claim 6, wherein said support structure includes a fixed support ~~(16)~~, an overhanging arm ~~(15)~~ having one end thereof slidably mounted along at least ~~a~~ one vertical guide ~~(16a)~~ on said fixed support ~~(16)~~, and drive means ~~(16b, 16c)~~ to cause said overhanging arm controllably to lift and lower.

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Claims 10-15 are withdrawn from consideration by the Examiner as belonging to non-elected species.